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PREACHED BEFORE
THE BISHOP OF QUEBEC,
AND
THE CLERGY OF UPPER CANADA,
AT
HIS LORDSHIP'S PRIMARY VISITATION,

HELD IN YORK,

ON WEDNESDAY, 30TH AUG. 1826.

By THE REV. JOHN WENHAM, MISSIONARY,
AT BROCKVILLE.

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TO THE HONORABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND
FATHER IN GOD, CHARLES JAMES, BY DIVINE
PERMISSION, LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

MY LORD,

IT is with feelings of sincere veneration and esteem, that I present the following Discourse delivered by command at your Lordship's primary visitation. I am deeply sensible of the honor conferred upon me in your Lordship's desire that it should be printed; and I am also grateful to my Reverend Brethren whose kindness prompted a similar request.

The obedience due to your Lordship's Office in the Church, no less than my own feelings of personal obligation would admit of no hesitation in my compliance; and I confide myself with much cheerfulness to the same candour and indulgence by which I am already highly favored.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

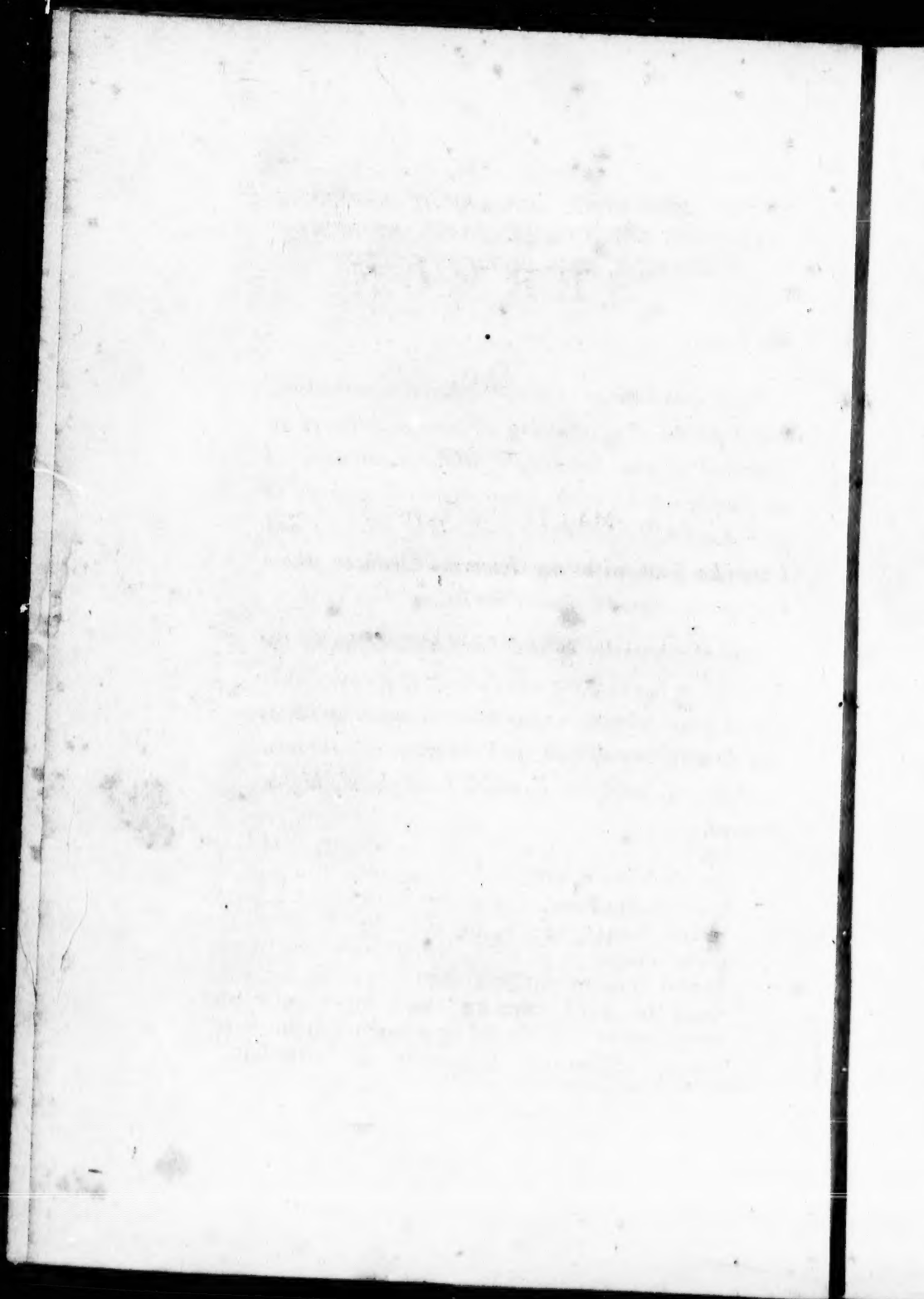
Your Lordship's

Most dutiful Son,

And Servant,

JOHN WENHAM.

BROCKVILLE, September, 1826.



A

S E R M O N

&c.

MATTHEW, xxviii. 20.

"Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

NOTHING is more calculated to improve our estimation of any advantage we enjoy, than to be on the point of losing it;—unless that perhaps a stronger effect may be produced by its temporary absence and restoration.

It was therefore with feelings of peculiar gladness that the disciples of Christ welcomed his return to their society after the short separation occasioned by his sufferings and death; and they listened no doubt with unwonted attention to those instructions, by which in less ambiguous terms than formerly, he unfolded to them the great purposes of his advent, that "thus it behoved him to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem."*

*Luke, xxiv. 46, 47.

The chief ground of anxiety under their peculiar circumstances may easily be conjectured. They felt the necessity of their master's presence to sustain their courage and to invigorate their obedience;—they had recently been scattered as sheep without a shepherd, and must have dreaded the thoughts of Christ's again departing from them, as was intimated when he said "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."* What cordial then, could so revive their spirits and tend to allay their anxieties as the explicit promise of my text; one fraught with heavenly consolation adapted to every possible exigency; "Lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world?"

It is on this account that the subject before me has been chosen as particularly appropriate for an occasion like the present, when the duty to which I am called, is not, my Reverend Brethren, to deliver to you a charge in the capacity of your superior, but only to suggest such considerations for our mutual encouragement, as may have a tendency to unite us more closely in "one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."†

There are several points of view indeed, in which these words seem to have a particular claim on our attention.

Addressed to those who were intrusted with the commission to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,"‡ "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them;"§ they affix the seal of author-

*John, xx. 17.

†Philippians, i. 27.

‡Luke, xiv. 15.

§Matthew, xxviii. 19.

ity and power to the credentials of a duly appointed ministry, and strongly enforce obedience to Apostolic precepts, adherence to Apostolic practice, and a regard to the due transmission of that authority with which Christ invested the primary officers of his Church.

This sublime promise of our Lord affords likewise a cogent proof, as well as a powerful ILLUSTRATION of his divine nature, which *can* thus be always present with his Apostles and their successors in the great work of evangelizing the human race, unto the end of time.—A proof and illustration which all the ingenuity displayed by modern impugnors of this doctrine has failed to obviate.

But it is chiefly in a different view of my text, equally admissible with either of the former, that I propose it to your attention this day: viz. as eminently calculated to inspire us with energy in the prosecution of our duties, as well as to attach us to them; and although in this acceptation it requires to be treated with greater plainness and simplicity, and so appears less fit to be offered to the consideration of my present audience; it is a signification which cannot be deemed unimportant, and by the blessing of Almighty God may be hoped to prove no less profitable.

Considering then, the preceding doctrines to be implied, and without entering more particularly into the proof of them, I observe that Christ is present with us according to his most blessed promise.

- I. By the explicit sanction of his authority.
- II. By the promised grace of his Holy Spirit.

III. By the indefeisible assurance of success in our endeavours.

IV. By the never failing care and protection of his Providence.

The presence of Christ with his Apostles and their successors in the government of the Church, to whom the oversight thereof is committed, gives the highest possible sanction to their jurisdiction and proceedings.—Thus runs the tenor of their high and most responsible commission “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,”* corresponding also with what Christ addressed to St. Peter when he said, “I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”† In similar words the same power was afterwards conferred on the rest of the Apostles; and in such a sense as is compatible with the absence of immediate miraculous inspiration is transmitted through succeeding ages; by virtue of which, the portals of this spiritual temple, his holy Church, are constantly held open, inviting the entrance of all mankind; and are closed only against the intrusion of the impious and profane, the scoffer and the infidel.

Of this “Authority given for edification,” an inferior measure is also committed to subordinate gradations in the ministry, when they are required to distinguish in those whom they admit by the Sacrament of Baptism, or to refuse the administration of the Holy Communion, to such as by the notoriety of their evil lives give pain-

*John xx. 21.

†Matt. 16, 19.

ful evidence that "although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth, as St. Augustine saith, the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation, would eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."*

To rebuke scandalous offenders, to exhort the negligent, to encourage the weak, and to administer the language of consolation, even as from the lips of their divine master, are also implied in that authority which by the promised presence of Christ is conferred upon the Priestly office;—sanctioned moreover by this awful warning, "he then that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."†

Such is the investiture of sacred authority conferred by the Great Head of the Church, on those who to the end of time should be commissioned to watch over and feed that flock which the Chief Shepherd purchased with his precious blood;—an authority which it is the highest sacrilege to pervert for the nourishment of our own pride or covetousness, to feed the appetite of vanity, or ambition, or to gratify a thirst for applause.

The dignity and responsible nature of the office unto which we are called, is, if rightly understood, little calculated to foster in us vain notions of conceit and self importance, but rather to impress our minds most solemnly with the weight and responsibility of its sacred duties and in recollection of the frailty of that "earthen vessel" to which so great a treasure is com-

*Article xxix.

†1 Thess. iv. 8.

mitted, to excite deep humility, and fervent prayer, that our ministrations may be accompanied with that "excellency of the power" which is "of God and not of us."*

II. The presence of Christ with his faithful servants implies the promised Grace of his Holy Spirit.

In the recollection of the important duties confided to him, St. Paul was ready to exclaim, "who is sufficient for these things," how much are we therefore bound to look up to God by prayer continually, for that ordinary light and assistance which are still bestowed. We do not in any degree, expect the performance of miracles, which have long since ceased; but in our endeavours to understand the scriptures by diligent study and patient research, we are authorized to believe that "He" the blessed "Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth;"† that he will assist our mental efforts, and give us a right judgment in all things; enabling us perspicuously and earnestly to enforce sound doctrine, and of "those things which we ourselves have learned, and received, and heard,"‡ "to teach others also."§

Nor is it a consideration to be lost sight of in this part of our subject, that our own advancement in the christian life will be furthered, by those methods which we take for promoting it in others. Of what importance the promise of our Lord and master is in this respect, cannot be estimated, nor how much upon our own improvement in faith and holiness depends

*2 Corinthians, iv. 7.

†Philippians, iv. 9.

‡John, xvi. 13.

§2 Timothy, ii. 2.

the edification of our flocks. But the recollection of Christ's promise with us will have a tendency to produce those devout affections,—that holy gratitude and ardent zeal which manifesting itself in our intercourse with the world, may kindle in the breasts of others a chastised and holy fervour.

It is Our privilege detached from secular pursuits, and therefore it may be presumed in a greater degree than others exempt from secular cares, to keep more or less continually present to our minds the recollection of "things unseen and eternal." Our duties oblige us perpetually to call to view the Omniscience & Omnipresence of the Deity. Nor these abstractly considered, but that he is especially present with his devout worshippers, and most especially with those engaged by virtue of his authority, in propagating and upholding his true religion upon earth.

His presence by the agency of the Divine Spirit is promised in the communication of spiritual blessings along with the due administration of his holy Word and Sacraments, accompanying the outward and visible sign with the inward and spiritual grace, and giving effect to the exhortations, admonitions, and encouragements, held forth by the preaching of the gospel.—In immediate connection with this, is my remark,

III. That Christ is present with us in virtue of his indefeasible assurance; to crown our faithful endeavours with ultimate success.

The measure of this success in all appearance may greatly differ, according to various circumstances perhaps not within the reach of our controul. But the *most* despised messenger of Christ who faithfully "fulfils the ministry which

he has received in the Lord to testify the gospel of the grace of God,"* is a witness even to the ungodly and impenitent, on behalf of his Lord and master, and shall hereafter be acknowledged as such; and although perhaps too sanguine in the immediate result of his endeavors he has toiled all night and caught nothing; the presence of his divine master, at whose command he again lets down the net, may fill it with an abundance, amply recompensing his previous labour.†

The kingdom of our Redeemer however, more generally cometh not with observation, but in its most certain and effectual advances is compared to leaven, gradually and silently diffusing itself: and how often a reproof apparently despised may have smitten the conscience; how often an exhortation seemingly disregarded may have produced an unobserved effect; how frequently the warning given him of his danger may have forced the sinner upon his knees, or the promulgation of the message of mercy may have consoled the penitent, or the sincere and humble christian may have been animated by the promises of the gospel;—although known to him who is ever present with us, it may not be fitting, or to our advantage that we should be here acquainted with. Sufficient should it be for us, that we labour to approve ourselves to his perpetual inspection "as the ministers of God, by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by the Holy Ghost, by faith unfeigned, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."†

*Cor. iv. 17. Acts, xx. 24.

†2 Cor. vi. 6, 7.

†Compare Luke v. 5. with John xxi. 3, 6.

It is our duty, as the Heralds of salvation to proclaim the joyful tidings, assured that the proclamation can never be wholly vain; for "the word of the Lord shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleaseth, and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sends it;" and "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall his servant be glorious in the eyes of the Lord and his God shall be his strength."*

IV. The presence of Christ implies the never failing care and protection of his providence.

Not that here either, we are to look for miracles, nor to expect that on our behalf natural causes shall cease to operate; but of this we may be confident, that the path of duty, is to us the path of safety, and that nothing shall befall us therein, otherwise than is suitable with a wise design, and tending to a beneficial result.

The presence of Christ is not designed to exempt us from the lot of mortality, its scenes of hope and fear, of joy or bitterness, which are inseparable from human events and relationships, even our blessed master himself not only endured in an extraordinary measure the ills and privations of life, but sympathized deeply and affectionately with the sufferings of others: "we too, who are commanded to "rejoice with them that rejoice," must also "weep with them that weep."† Yet when his service demands of us extraordinary sacrifice of our inclinations, the exposure of our persons to inconvenience, or perchance of our lives to peril; it is the privilege of the christian soldier to remember, that he fights not only under the banner, but under the

*Isaiah, lv. 11. xlix. 5.

†Romans, xii. 15.

immediate inspection of his great Captain, and if exposed to the fury of the most raging storm, that He whom the winds and the sea obey is with him. Under such circumstances as appeared justly calculated to excite alarm, Christ often proved the faith of his disciples in his power and care of them, during his abode upon earth; as when he constrained them on a stormy evening to cross the lake of Gennesareth, and afterwards approached the vessel in which they were, walking on the water; but how speedily were their fears allayed by that animating recognition, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."* In the darkest night, under the most appalling circumstances, if at the command of his Lord he is brought into them, the christian may realize his master's presence and rest assured of a divine protection.

To this watchful care, continually exercised over our present Diocesan in a great variety of toils and dangers, to that Providence which disappointed the apprehensions, of some among us,† and in his person has restored to our Church an Apostolical Head in the place of that venerated Bishop whose loss we had recent occasion to deplore;—To that watchful care and providence I say, we are particularly indebted for the satisfaction which must be felt by every one of us, at our first meeting under his godly superintendence.

Deprived by the course of nature of a Prelate who had nurtured the infant Church in this Col-

*Matthew, xiv. 27.

†A report having become prevalent that his Lordship left England early in the month of January in the Packet ship Crisis, which has not since been heard of.

ony with solicitous anxiety during the long period of her nonage, and whose endeavours to lay broad and deep the foundation of her future prosperity were unremitting; it is our happiness to find in his successor a character endeared to every Christian by his piety and zeal, intimately acquainted with local circumstances from a course of previous inspection, and who had already devoted himself in a very disinterested manner, to the advancement of the Church in Canada, according to that pure and Apostolic form, which has the promise of our Divine Master we have now been considering.

How seriously the Society's Missionaries in former times were accustomed to deplore the want of a Colonial Episcopate many of their writings will sufficiently testify. Destitute of a Bishop resident among them, by whose discretionary power vacancies might be immediately filled up, and such arrangements made on the spot as were best adapted to promote the interests of religion; the most lamentable effects frequently followed on the death of a laborious and faithful Missionary, in the dispersion of his people, or their becoming in part a prey to sectarian influence, before the delay incidental to the necessary references home, would admit of the station being filled. Nor was it possible under these disadvantages that it should always be done in such adaptation of a Pastor to his flock as was desirable; not to mention that the education of some portion of the Clergy among those who are to be benefited by their ministrations, (which has always been considered a desirable measure,) was frequently prevented

by the necessity of their going to England for Ordination.

At the time when the neighboring States declared themselves independent, sixteen Missionaries from the Society for propagating the Gospel officiated in the Province of New York, one other, viz. the Rector of the City being paid solely by the Crown. Owing to the events which then took place they were scattered and fled : but the pure doctrines of our holy religion, identified by the sound formularies in which they had been taught, that good seed of the kingdom which under so many disadvantages had been sown, again sprung up when the storm which checked its progress had subsided, and has brought forth abundant increase.

With what confidence then may we, who enjoy privileges withheld from them, entertain the hope that by means of our exertions the principles of true religion will be found to have taken deep and effectual root ; and that by the further establishment of the Church of England in this Province, under a Representative of our Sovereign who so peculiarly realizes to us his paternal character, future generations overspreading the vast tract of Country which surrounds us, may rejoice under the shadow of this Tree of Life.

Thus far the subject before us warrants our prospects, co-extensive with the duration of the World, since Christ has promised to be with his appointed ministers to the end of time. But distant and animating as is our view, and incomparably beyond what we might entertain from erecting the most stupendous work of art, even with the greatest possible skill and labor, yet

God forbid it should end here; for the Fabric which we are engaged in constructing, shall outlast the ruins of time, and appear eternal in the heavens: when the promise of Christ to be with us, shall be exchanged for that of which we now hold the reversion, namely to be with Him where He is that we may behold his Glory:—when he that had received ten talents, or five, or two, shall be rewarded according to his improvement of them, with that blessed sentence of approbation, “Well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

So bright a prospect then may well animate our labours, and encourage us manfully to persevere in well doing, “through honor & dishonor, through evil report and good report” superior to all discouragements “knowing that of the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for we serve the Lord Christ.”†

But while encouraged by the hopes and incited by the promises which especially belong to us as the Ministers of Religion; let us remember at the same time our serious responsibility, and the proportionably awful condemnation which awaits a dereliction of our duties.—The common lot of Christians cannot be imagined ours, it is either a higher heaven or a deeper hell: it is either to join in the General Assembly and Church of the first born whose names are written in Heaven; and among the spirits of just men made perfect, those whom by God's Grace we have been the means of assisting in their progress thither; or to be cast down into the lowest gulf of perdition, tormented

*John xvii. 24.

†2 Cor. vi. 8. Col. iii. 24.

with the severest remorse, and with the continual upbraidings of those whom our ungodliness and neglect have tended to ruin. The Church which we serve as our ordination ritual declares, "is the Spouse and Body of Christ." The flock committed to our care "are his sheep bought with his death and for whom He shed his blood, and if any member thereof do take hurt or hindrance by reason of our negligence," we cannot profess to be ignorant of "the greatness of the fault, nor of the horrible punishment that will ensue."

Yet seeing we have received this Ministry, let us "not faint, but renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;"* that "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear we also may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."†

*2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

†1 Peter, v. 4.

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